

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD DEPOT

Constructed: 1871

Address: 813 North 150 East

Present Owner: Lehi Historical Preservation Commission

The first symbolic spike of the LDS Church-owned Utah Southern Railroad was driven by Brigham Young on 1 May 1871, track-laying began a month later. The thirteen miles to Sandy were opened to traffic in September. By February of 1872 the line had reached Traverse Mountain, northwest of Lehi.

“There was rejoicing at Lehi yesterday.” reported the 28 September 1872 “Deseret Evening News.” The first main chugged into Lehi amid the cheers of hundreds of townspeople who were accompanied by a lively band. Most of the enthusiastic crowd saw, for the first time, a steam locomotive with its huge blunderbuss smokestack and shrieking whistle.

The effect of the Utah Southern on Lehi was dramatic. For almost a year the town remained the terminus for the line. Teamsters and bullwhackers transported goods to and from points south, as well as timber and ore from the rich mines in American Fork Canyon and the Tintic District. Many Lehi men found employment in the freighting and forwarding business.

In addition the area surrounding the “railroad house” at State Street and Second East exploded with growth. Dozens of saloons, boarding houses, eateries, and various types of mercantile establishments sprang up to service the railroad and its clientele.

In 1881 the Utah Central, Utah Southern, and Utah Southern Extension railroads were consolidated into the Utah Central Railway, which extended 280 miles south from Ogden and westward to San Francisco. In 1889, this railroad and the Utah & Nevada, Utah & Northern, Salt Lake & Western, Oregon Short Line, Oregon & Syracuse, and Idaho Central Railway Railroads were united under the management of the Union Pacific as the Oregon Short Lane & Utah Northern Railway Company.

This consolidation met with financial difficulties. In 1893 both the Oregon Short Line & Northern Railway Company, as well as the Union Pacific Railway, went into court receivership. On 16 March 1897, the Oregon Short Line & Utah Northern Railway was purchased at foreclosure and renamed the Oregon Short Line Railroad.

Union Pacific Railway was reorganized on July 1, 1897, into a Utah corporation--the Union Pacific Railroad. In the process, U.P. had lost control of the Oregon Short Line though it would regain it again by 1900. In November of that year, Union Pacific was sold at auction in Omaha to a group of investors which included E.H. Harriman.

In 1900 Montana Senator William Clark purchased a small railroad in Los Angeles and planned to extend it from Southern California to Salt Lake City. He named this line the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad (S.P., L.A. & S.L.). Following a controversy, Harriman and Clark reached a compromise on 9 July 1902, in which Clark sold half of the S.P., L.A. & S.L. to Harriman. Harriman then transferred all of the Oregon Short Line's property south of Sandy--including the Lehi station and west of the Jordan River in Salt Lake City--to S.P., L.A., & S.L.

The name of this line was shortened to Los Angeles & Salt Lake in 1916 (popularly called the Salt Lake route). In 1921, Clark sold the remaining half of the L.A. & S.L. to Union Pacific.

The 1 March 1973 "Lehi Free Press" announced that the U.P. offices had moved to the old hospital building on the south side of State Street, where they remained for only a short time.

The Jerry Harris family purchased the Union Pacific Depot, tore down the warehouse section of the building on the west, and moved the original portion of the depot to the Harris property north of the tracks at 813 North and 150 East. It remains there today, the oldest still-standing railroad depot in Utah. In 1996, the structure was purchased by the Lehi Historical Preservation Commission, who were successful in listing the building on the National Register of Historical Places. Plans are underway to eventually restore the building on its original site.